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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HOLDEN).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

February 25, 2009.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TIM HOLDEN to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

With our eyes fixed firmly on the coming of spring and on You, the creator of the whole universe, we resolve to hold fast to lasting values and the transcendent gifts of peace because of Your many blessings upon this Nation.

Yet we are called to renew our sense of equal justice and our equilibrium in a globalized world. Let the changes we embrace as disciplines because we are disciples in faith build our confidence in the future.

May prayer lift us beyond self-interest. May fasting bring us to the freedom to say, "That's enough." May our prayer and fasting lead us to greater compassion for others and great deeds of charity for those most in need. Since we are created in Your own image and likeness, we see You reflected in all Your people, especially those whom we serve in Your holy name.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

INCREASE REVENUE TO BALANCE THIS BUDGET

(Mr. MORAN of Virginia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, America is blessed to be led by the most eloquent spokesperson on the planet, but Barack Obama very well knows, as we do, that it's not enough to talk the talk, you have to walk the walk. The first step on that very rocky road begins tomorrow with the budget submission.

If the private sector is not willing to make the loans, to start the businesses, to hire the people necessary to get this economy back on its feet, then the public sector has to step up to the plate. But if we are going to be faithful to our children's future, then we are going to have to pay for the cost of this stimulus package and this budget submission, and that means that we are going to have to increase revenue so that we can ultimately balance this budget.

Democrats did that during the Clinton administration, and it worked, we generated budget surpluses and people at the highest tax rates brought home more after tax income than at any other time in American history. I know we have the courage to do that today, but the Republican Party also has to come up with a more constructive mantra than just saying "no."

CHANGE OUR PRACTICES ON EARMARKS

(Mr. FLAKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, it was recently reported by Politico that "FBI agents have spent months laying the groundwork for their current investigation, including conducting research on earmarks and campaign contributions."

With this as a backdrop, today we will consider a privileged resolution asking the Ethics Committee to conduct an investigation. This is not a

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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partisan resolution. It mentions no individual Member of Congress. It mentions no political party.

Over the past few years, we have seen outside investigations lead to indictments and convictions related to earmarks, yet we have done little to change our practices.

Today we will consider an omnibus spending bill containing nearly 9,000 earmarks, many of which are no-bid contracts to private companies, companies whose executives have, in addition to their lobbyists, contributed millions of dollars to Members who secured those earmarks. This simply isn't right.

Mr. Speaker, we owe this institution far more than we are giving it. Let's vote for this privileged resolution and give it the respect and dignity it deserves.

THE PEOPLE'S CHALLENGE

(Mr. BRALEY of Iowa asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, last night President Obama issued a call to action to the American people, and the American people are responding with a resounding "Yes, we can."

The problems that we face are many and enormous, and yet this is our challenge, it is our responsibility, and there is no better place than the people's House to do the people's business. Whether it's restoring confidence in our faltering financial markets, propping up a credit market that is non-existent, focusing on the incredible housing problems we face in this country, and at the same time committing investments in our educational system, investments in our health care reform and making sure that we have an energy policy that takes our dependence away from foreign oil and redirects it to renewable energy here in the United States.

This is still the government of the people, by the people and for the people, and this is the people's challenge. The President cannot solve these problems on his own. We are all in this together. It's time for the American people to make a renewed commitment to this country, reinvest in the future of America and inspire us to the new level of responsibility in the world community.

GO TEXAN

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this weekend over 4,000 trail riders will be arriving in Houston, Texas, and parade through downtown to kick off the world's largest rodeo and livestock show. These cowboys have been on the trail for days riding from towns all around Texas. With their horses, chuck wagons and barbecue, these riders are a

mixture of lawyers, executives, doctors, refinery workers, teachers and kids. There are also some real cowboys.

The Houston Rodeo and Livestock Show started in 1931 when seven men decided over lunch at the Texas State Hotel that this event was needed. The Rodeo and Livestock Show uses 20,000 volunteers and raises over \$11 million for scholarships for FFA students from all over Texas. The rodeo has featured such notable entertainers as Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, Elvis, George Strait and every major country singer in the world.

For 15 nights, 50,000 Houstonians "Go Texan" and "Cowboy Up" for not only the world's largest rodeo, but the world's largest barbecue cook-off. All of these events center around Texas Independence Day, March 2. But it is the trail riders that relive the past of the Old West by spending days on the trail that are the ones that start this excitement.

And that's just the way it is.

MEET OUR INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

(Mr. YARMUTH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, I like to think that government is the way that we organize our responsibilities to each other.

Last night, President Obama gave a clear path to explain how this government can help us meet our responsibilities to each other. He mentioned government and laid a groundwork for government, not as a substitute for private initiative and private enterprise, but as a catalyst for private initiative and private enterprise.

As a facilitator and enabler he showed the way that this government can help people realize their ambitions and rebuild America in a much stronger position.

As we move forward in considering the agenda that President Obama has laid out, I hope that we will remember that not only do we call on individual Americans to meet their responsibilities to each other, but that we as Members of Congress meet our individual responsibilities to them and to make this government one that truly stands united in favor of the American people.

This was truly an inspirational charge that we were given last night, and I hope we all listen carefully.

NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR TAX HIKES

(Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, after just passing a \$1 trillion spending plan, the Democrats in Congress claim they will tax and spend our way out of this economic gloom. I be-

lieve we should root out government waste before we add new government spending, and we don't want to increase taxes when folks are already feeling pinched by this tough economy.

In the Texas State House, the Speaker threatened to kick me off Ways and Means if I didn't vote to raise taxes. I just said "no." When I didn't vote to raise taxes, they booted me off the committee. What can I say—there were no new taxes in Texas. How about America?

This Congress must approve a Federal spending freeze before we can consider tax hikes during these uncertain economic times. The last thing we need to do is push consumer confidence even lower. Let's take tax hikes off the table.

A CALL FOR ACTION FROM THIS NATION

(Mr. WALZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, last night President Obama issued a call for action from this Nation. He clearly laid out the economic situation that we are in right now, but, more importantly, he laid out a plan for growth, a plan that started a week ago with the passage of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act.

What it did was it staunched the bleeding of jobs that we were losing at a rate of 600,000 in January, but it made a much more important investment in the future. President Obama laid out his priorities for the next budget, an investment in education, an investment in energy security and an investment in reining in the cost of health care.

I represent the southern Minnesota district that includes the Mayo Clinic. I also represent a district that is a leader in wind production and biofuels, not just nationwide but internationally.

I also had a guest last night, Chuck Ehler, the superintendent of a small school, Rushford-Peterson, in my district. That community was devastated by flooding that had a Federal disaster in 2007. It's a 103-year-old building.

The people and the citizens who will fuel our economic recovery are those citizens trying to learn in a building that will not work. We must invest in the future. That's how we repair our economy.

WE STAND READY TO WORK

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, House Republicans remain ready to tackle the tough challenges facing our Nation. Getting our economy back on track, providing affordable quality education and health care, and protecting American families are